

WHAT RESULT DO WE WANT?

All babies in North Carolina are born healthy, thrive in caring and healthy homes, and see their first birthday.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Infant mortality is considered a key indicator of the overall health of the population, and both infant and maternal mortality are multifaceted problems impacted by factors such as access to care, poverty, systemic racism, and housing.¹

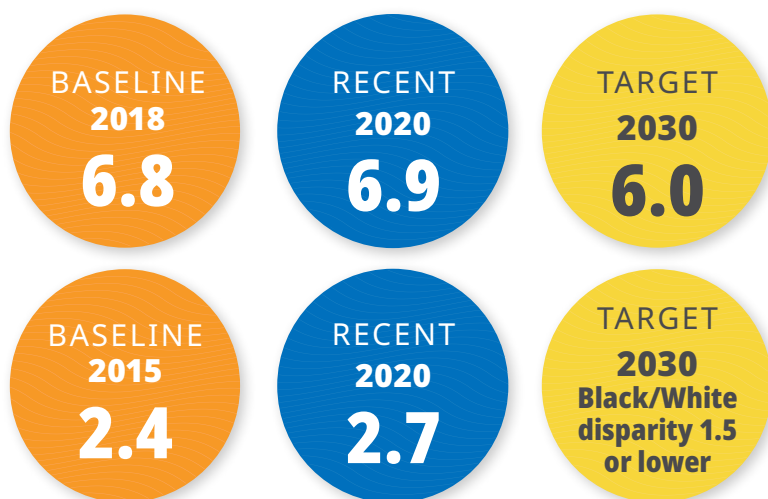
Racial disparities have long plagued the state's infant mortality rate and many other health indicators, now including those associated with the current pandemic. And at the same time, as with COVID-19, we know how to prevent many infant deaths. Other states have prioritized addressing racial gaps in infant deaths and have moved to expand Medicaid, address the impacts of racism on birth outcomes, and implement a number of policies that improve family economic security. Here in North Carolina, it is beyond time to implement critical policy interventions that we already know will work to prevent unnecessary infant deaths.²

HNC 2030 HEADLINE INDICATOR:

**Rate of infant births
per 1,000 live births**

WHAT DOES THIS INDICATOR MEASURE?

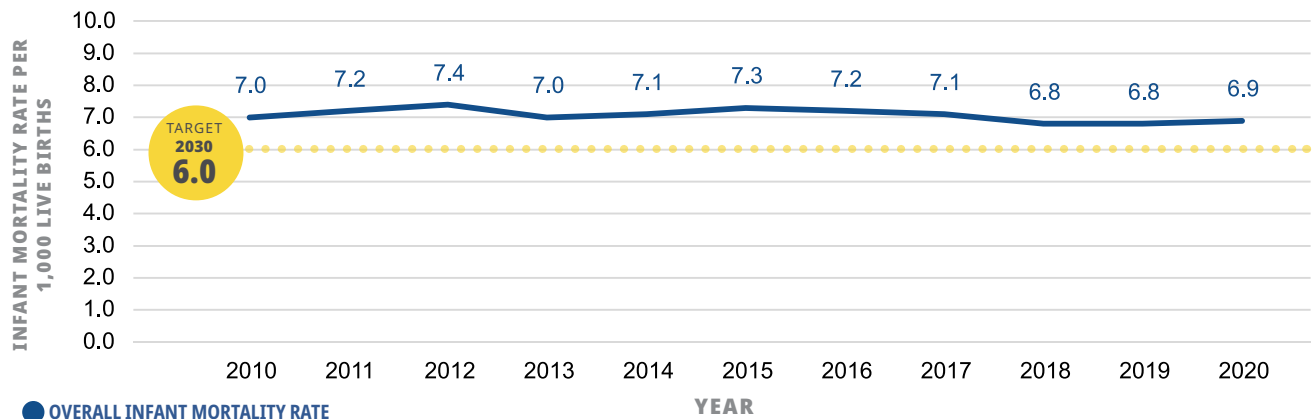
- The data are produced annually using counts of resident birth certificate data and death Certificate data.
- The disparity ratio indicator is a ratio of the non-Hispanic black to the non-Hispanic White infant mortality rates, calculated by aggregating five years of data.

BASELINE DATA FROM HNC 2030**HOW ARE WE DOING?**

- The HNC 2030 target for infant mortality rate is 6.0 per 1,000 live births.
- Black/African Americans experience over two and a half times more infant deaths than White/Caucasians.
- Infant mortality rates have been relatively stable for the last decade.

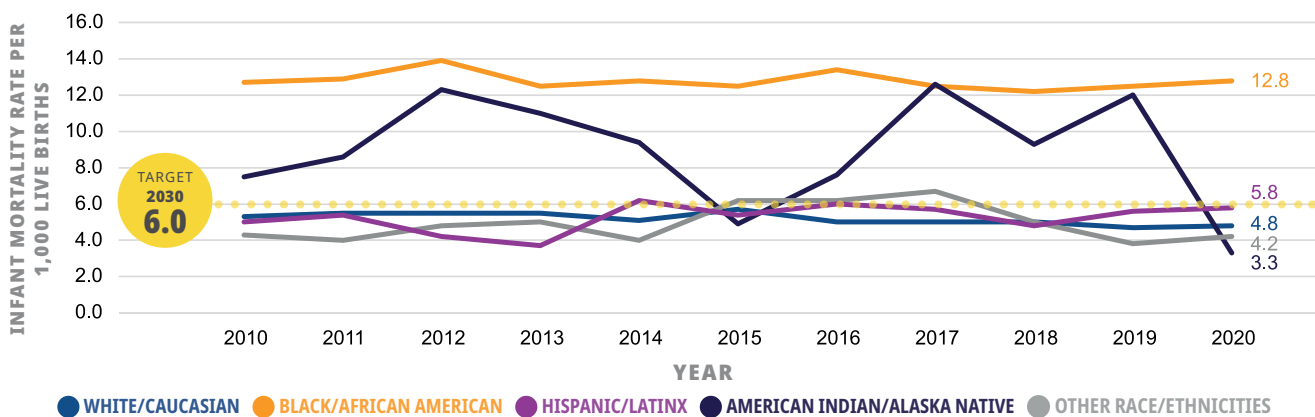
CURRENT DATA TRENDED OVER TIME

Figure 81. Infant mortality rate in North Carolina (2010 - 2020)



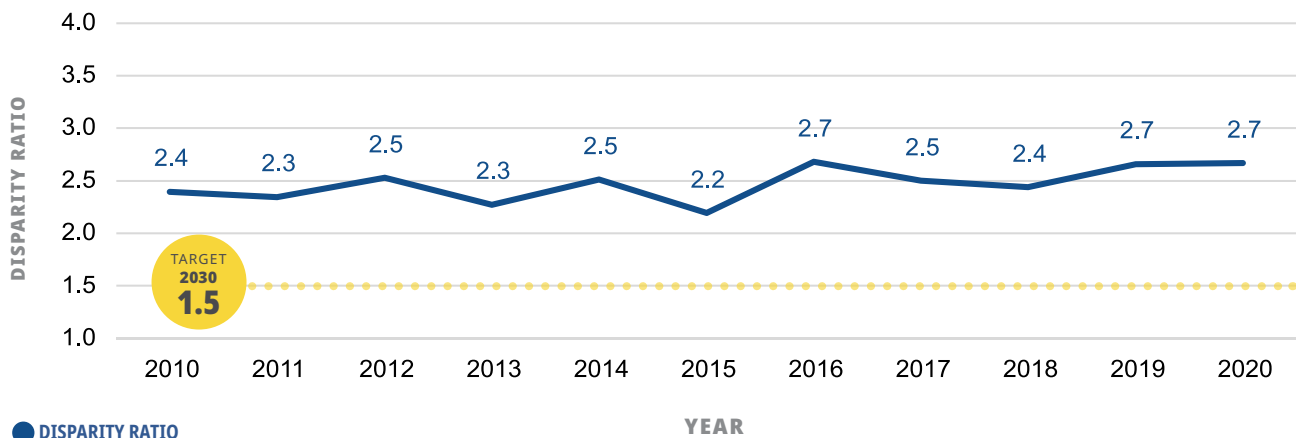
Data source: N.C. State Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics.

Figure 82. Infant mortality rate in North Carolina by race/ethnicity (2010 - 2020)



Data source: N.C. State Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics. Data not available for Asian/Pacific Islanders.

Figure 83. Infant mortality disparity ratio between Black/African Americans and White/Caucasians in North Carolina (2010 - 2020)



Data source: N.C. State Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics.

THE STORY BEHIND THE CURVE

Participants in the 2021 NC SHIP Community Council Meeting and Symposia expressed the following thoughts about infant mortality:

- “It’s hard to understand the root causes.”
- “Physiological stress due to racism, adverse childhood experiences, and social determinants play a huge role.”
- “Many children who died in the first year of life had no father listed on the birth certificate.”
- “The father’s name not being on the birth certificate may be an important predictor of risk – what does it mean? Is there economic, emotional stress?”
- “There are barriers to getting the father added: access to notary, transportation, affidavit of parentage is not easily found, cost of DNA test.”
- “Indicator rates for fertility suffer from small counts. Rates are sensitive with small counts and should be interpreted with caution. How do we navigate issues of equity if we can’t measure with small numbers?”
- “We need attorneys that understand statutes for adding father to the birth certificate.”

WHAT OTHER DATA DO WE NEED?

- Demographic profile of teens in community
- Number of middle and high schools
- Location of contraceptive health services (public and private)
- Number/map of organizations in community that have similar interest in teens and reproductive health
- Number/map of youth-serving businesses
- Estimate of number of pregnancies prevented
- Availability/utilization of services adjusted by the demographic rates
- Inventory of issues/challenges affecting access to services

WHAT COULD WORK TO TURN THE CURVE?

- Adopt national maternal and infant risk-appropriate Levels of Care Standards
- Allow pharmacists to dispense oral and transdermal hormonal contraceptives
- Expand efforts to prevent infant deaths related to unsafe sleep environments
- Improve access to, and use of, prenatal care, including Centering Pregnancy Programs, group prenatal care, evidence-based home visiting programs, and doula services
- Improve pre-conception routine medical check-ups and family planning counseling
- Include cultural and linguistic competency in preconception routine medical checkups and reproductive life planning so all babies see their first birthday
- Increase access to health insurance
- Increase access to smoking cessation, obesity and diabetes prevention, and alcohol use programs to women of reproductive age and to pregnant people
- Increase businesses, faith entities, and public buildings that qualify as breastfeeding friendly, and normalize breastfeeding in public spaces
- Support training on health equity including implicit bias and determinants of health
- Utilize the Children’s Health Insurance Program option to provide coverage for comprehensive prenatal care to undocumented immigrant women



“WEATHERING, DEFINED AS THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF BLACK WOMEN (TOXIC STRESS), PUTS MOTHER AND CHILD AT RISK FOR NEGATIVE BIRTH OUTCOMES.”

- 2021 NC SHIP Community Council participant

RECOMMENDED READING/LISTENING

Maternal and Infant Mortality in North Carolina.
<https://www.ncmedicaljournal.com/content/ncm/82/3/191.full.pdf>

Title V Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Block Grant.
<https://mchb.hrsa.gov/programs-impact/title-v-maternal-child-health-mch-block-grant>

NC PARTNERS WHO CAN HELP US

PARTNER/POTENTIAL PARTNER	WEBSITE LINK
Family Connects International	https://familyconnects.org/
Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute	https://fpg.unc.edu/
March of Dimes- NC Chapter	https://www.marchofdimes.org/state-advocacy/state-advocacy-priorities-and-wins-NC.aspx
National Birth Equity Collaborative (NBEC)	https://birthequity.org/
NC Breastfeeding Coalition	https://www.ncbfc.org/
NC Child	https://ncchild.org/
NC DHHS Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities	https://www.ncminorityhealth.org/
NC Obstetrical and Gynecological Society	https://www2.ncmedsoc.org/nc-obstetrical-and-gynecological-society
North Carolina Midwifery Education, Regulation, and Association (MERA)	https://www.ncmera.org/
Smart Start- Home Visiting & Parenting Education System-Building	https://www.smartstart.org/about-smart-start/
The UNC Center of Excellence in Maternal and Child Health Education, Science and Practice	https://sph.unc.edu/mch/center-of-excellence/
Triple P- The Positive Parenting Program	https://www.triplep-parenting.com/nc-en/find-help/triple-p-online/?itb=3ebd728de6fa78aa8bc932e9abece9c0&gclid=CjwKCAiAvriMBhAuEiwA8Cs5ITwRqDy9_GaQc9HT-VoMHKGjs5pDURDkk0JjIwJrf5kHHvWTe98wEhoCO6EQAvD_BwE
UNC Collaborative for Maternal and Infant Health	https://www.mombaby.org/